

Environmental Assessment
Newport Research Facility
Irish Hill



for
Air Force Research Laboratory
Rome Research Site
150 Electronic Parkway
Rome, New York 13441-4516

Prepared By
Lu Engineers
175 Sully's Trail Suite 202
Pittsford, NY 14534

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Executive Summary

The Air Force Research Laboratory/ Rome Research Site (AFRL/RRS) proposes to acquire approximately 87.8 acres of land adjacent to the Newport Research Facility at Irish Hill. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to protect the missions conducted at the site and to prevent encroachment through the development of adjacent properties. The Proposed Action is needed to eliminate encroachment possibilities due to the potential for buildings to be built that would effectively block radar transmission potential between Irish Hill and Tanner Hill. The Proposed Action also allows for the trimming of trees and cutting of vegetation to permit the test transmissions to take place effectively.

The AFRL/RRS has conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and evaluate potential effects of the proposed action at the Newport Research Facility. Two technical alternatives for completing the proposed action were considered. Alternative 1- leasing the land from the current owner; and Alternative 2- purchasing the land in entirety. Alternative 1 was considered unreasonable, because it does not allow for future development of a new range, or expansion of the present test facility. Alternative 2 was considered reasonable, because it meets all project criteria. Alternative 2 is the preferred technical alternative and Proposed Action. The Proposed Action and the No-Action Alternative received detailed analysis in the EA. Other alternatives failed to meet the criteria for the project, and were thus not considered in this EA.

Future opportunities created by the Proposed Action also allow for building and expanding the facility if funds become available, increasing testing capabilities. Currently, AFRL/RRS does not intend to disturb any of the lands associated with this acquisition with the exception of the possible installation of a perimeter fence. The overall mission of the Newport Research Facility at Irish Hill will not change.

The No-Action Alternative does not allow for the above scenarios to take place, as future facility expansion is not feasible on the present landholdings due to limited space. Potential shut-down of the facility could occur if encroachment is allowed, and testing programs could be eliminated if vegetation continues to grow, potentially blocking transmissions during testing.

The Proposed Action would have no effect on Air Quality, Water Resources, Safety and Health, Hazardous Waste/Contaminated Materials, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, and Socioeconomics of the project site and surrounding communities.

The No-Action would also have no effect on the environment; however, this alternative would not allow for the facility to continue conducting missions, as potential development and vegetation growth could prohibit the ability to conduct test transmissions at the site.

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1.0 Introduction

Lu Engineers has been retained as a consultant by the Air Force Research Laboratory, Rome Research Site (AFRL/RRS), to conduct an evaluation of potential impacts related to the proposed acquisition of approximately 87.8 acres of land (“project site”) adjacent to the Newport Research Facility at Irish Hill. The project site is located in the Town of Newport, Herkimer County, New York (Figure 1). The purpose of the acquisition is to protect the missions conducted at the site and to prevent encroachment through the development of adjacent properties. Currently, AFRL/RRS does not intend to disturb the lands associated with this acquisition with exception of the possible installation of a perimeter fence.

2.0 Purpose and Need and Description of Alternatives

2.1 Purpose of Proposed Action

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to purchase land in order to eliminate encroachment possibilities due to the potential for buildings to be built that would effectively block radar transmission potential between Irish Hill and Tanner Hill. This could potentially lead to closure of the entire Newport facility due to being unable to perform mission-related testing. The Proposed Action also allows for the trimming of trees and cutting of vegetation to permit the test transmissions to take place effectively. Future opportunities created by the Proposed Action also allow for building and expanding the facility if funds become available, thus increasing testing capabilities.

2.2 Alternatives

Alternative 1- leasing the land. Leasing would alleviate immediate concerns with building encroachment and vegetation control. However this alternative does not allow for future development of a new range, or expansion of the present test facility. All test capabilities would be limited to the existing landholdings. No additional Alternatives to lease lands exist at the Newport Test Facility, as no other lands adjacent or nearby are for sale or lease.

2.3 No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative does not allow for the above scenarios to take place, as future facility expansion is not feasible on the present landholdings due to limited space. Potential shut-down of the facility could occur if encroachment is allowed, and testing programs could be eliminated if vegetation continues to grow, potentially blocking transmissions during testing.

3.0 Affected Environment

3.1 Air Installation Compatible Use Zone/Land Use

The purpose of the acquisition is to protect the missions conducted at the site and to prevent encroachment through the development of adjacent properties. Currently, AFRL/RRS does not intend to disturb any of the lands associated with this acquisition with exception of the possible installation of a perimeter fence. The overall mission of at the Newport Research Facility at Irish Hill will not change. There will be no increase in traffic or changes in imperviousness as a result of the property acquisition.

The subject properties are currently zoned agricultural. According to the Herkimer County Real Properties Service, the "Site Property Class" for the Denslow parcel is listed as "Vac Farmland" (vacant farmland) and the Riccioni Parcel is listed as "Field Crops". The proposed project does include any improvements to the lands that will be acquired.

3.2 Air Quality

The proposed project is not located in a non-attainment area. The proposed parcel acquisition does not include the installation of new stationary or mobile air emission sources. Therefore there will be no impacts to air quality as a result of the proposed project.

3.3 Water Resources

3.3.1 Surface Waters

The project area is located in the West Canada Creek drainage basin. The hillside within the project area is bisected by numerous ravines. The westernmost ravine is a class c water body according the NYSDEC. Class C waters are considered waters that support fisheries and are suitable for non - contact activities. The surface water will not be impacted by the proposed project.

3.3.2 Aquifers

The site not located within a designated Sole Source Aquifer, Primary or Principal Aquifer. Public water is not available at the project site. Private water wells supply drinking water within the project area. This project will not impact the groundwater at this site.

3.3.3 Stormwater

The proposed project does not include the disturbance of the ground surface; therefore the project is exempt from NYSDEC SPDES requirements.

3.4 Safety and Health

3.4.1 Asbestos

The acquisition of the parcel will not result in impact to potentially asbestos containing materials.

3.4.2 Radiation

This project does not involve radioactive materials.

3.4.3 Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Hazard

This project does not involve flying aircraft and will not result in an increase in air traffic within the project area, therefore bird strikes or aircraft collisions with other wildlife do not pose a concern.

3.5 Hazardous Waste/Contaminated Materials

Environmental Baseline Surveys were conducted (October 2010) for both properties being acquired. These surveys did not indicate the presence of hazardous waste or contaminated materials associated with either property.

3.6 Biological Resources

3.6.1 Natural Communities

The portion of the Riccioni parcel south of Lindsay Road is a relatively flat old agricultural field bordered by treed hedgerows to the south and east. Lindsay Road forms the northern border. This parcel has been actively farmed until recently. Vegetation primarily consists of pioneer species including goldenrod, hawthorns, multiflora rose, and raspberries.

The southern portion the Riccioni Parcel north of Lindsay Road is an old field that slopes gently to the north. The old field portion of this site appears to have been actively farmed until recently. Vegetation in the old field consists of primarily pioneer species including goldenrod, hawthorns, multiflora rose, and raspberries. The northern portion of this parcel consists of a moderately sloped forested hillside. A steep ravine occupies the western corner of this parcel. Vegetation on the forested hillside includes a mix of maples, ashes and birches. Openings in the forested hillside are vegetated by multiflora rose and raspberries.

The southern portion of the Denslow Parcel north of Lindsay Road includes an active hayfield to the west and a former dairy pasture to that has been recently seeded as a hay field. The northern portion of this parcel is primarily a moderately to steeply sloped forested hillside that includes several ravines. Vegetation includes a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees including maples, hemlock and ash. An area approximately 2.5 acres in size located at a break in slope is dominated by cattail, sedges and rushes.

The eastern portion of Denslow Parcel south of Lindsay Road is a moderately sloped shrub land dominated by hawthorns and multiflora rose. The western portion is a recently cultivated hay field.

The soils in the project are not listed as hydric with the exception of the shaly rock land, very steep soils that have an unknown hydric rating (see attachment 1).

3.6.2 Wetlands

A review of National Wetland Inventory mapping indicates that there are no wetlands within the project area (see attachment 2). Wetland vegetation is present in isolated areas patches throughout the fields. Wetland vegetation dominates an area approximately 2.5 acres in size located on the Denslow parcel northeast of the Transmit site. Wetland vegetation is also established in some of the hillside ravines. None of the potential wetland areas will be impacted by this project.

A review of the New York State Wetland data base indicates that there are no state wetlands within the project area (See attachment 3).

3.6.3 Threatened or Endangered Species

The United States Department of Interior-Fish and Wildlife Service (USDOI-FWS) was contacted regarding the possible presence of threatened and endangered species and critical habitat areas (See attachment 4). According to the USDOI-FWS, with the possible exception of transient individuals, there are no federally listed or proposed endangered or threatened species under federal jurisdiction known to exist in the project impact area. In addition, no habitat in the project impact area is currently designated or proposed "critical habitat" in accordance with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

The NYSDEC, New York Natural Heritage Program was contacted regarding the potential presence of threatened or endangered species and critical environmental areas adjacent to the project site. According to the NYSDEC there are no records of state listed threatened or endangered species and critical environmental areas within the project area (See attachment 5).

3.6.4 Floodplains

A review of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for the project area revealed that the project area is not located in a floodplain.

3.7 Cultural Resources

A project review request was sent to the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). SHPO determined that the project would have no effect on cultural or historic resources. Copies of the project review request and SHPO determination letter are included as attachment 6. No further coordination is required for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

3.8 Geology and Soils

3.8.1 Bedrock

Bedrock geology consists of the Upper Ordovician Frankfort Shale and Siltstone of the Lorraine Group. Phase II sampling and testing work at the adjacent NRF-Irish Hill Facility indicated the presence of weathered shale at approximately 5 to 12 ft below grade. Sampling and testing also revealed that the predominant soil type is glacial till consisting primarily of silt and clay. Phase II sampling at the Subject Property indicated the presence of silt loam 0-24 inches below

the ground surface. Bedrock is present in the ravines particularly in the western portion of the project area. The project will not result in the denial of accessibility to geologic resources.

3.8.2 Soils

Soil types mapped for the project site include: Burdett silt loam, Honeoye and Lansing silt loams, Hornell silt loam, Manlius shaly silt loam, Nassau silt loam these soils is provided in Table 1. The propose project will not result in the disturbance of any lands beyond what is necessary to install a perimeter fence.

Table 1: Summary of Soils in Project Area

Soil Description	Map Unit Symbol	Hydric Rating	Farmland Rating Classification
Burdett silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	BuB	Not Hydric	Prime Farmland if Drained
Honeoye and Lansing silt loams, 25 to 35 percent slopes	Hre	Not Hydric	No Prime Farmland
Hornell silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	HtB	Not Hydric	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Lansing silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	LnC	Not Hydric	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Manlius shaly silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	MIB	Not Hydric	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Nassau silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	NaB	Not Hydric	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Nassau silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	NaC	Not Hydric	Not Prime Farmland
Rough broken land	Ro	Not Hydric	Not Prime Farmland
Shaly rock land, very steep	ShF	Unknown Hydric	Not Prime Farmland

3.8.3 Topography

Topographic elevations vary from approximately 1,600 ft on the southern portion to approximately 1,160 ft on the north, northeastern, and eastern portions of the Subject Property. There will be no modification to the existing topography as result of the acquisition of the parcels.

3.9 Socioeconomic

The proposed property acquisition will not have an impact on employment opportunities in the surrounding communities. The properties are currently vacant; therefore no residents will be displaced by the proposed acquisition. Through the acquisition of the properties the United States Air Force (USAF) is continuing to make an investment in the community.

Negative impacts on the adjacent community are not anticipated. Emergency access to the surrounding community will not be impacted by the proposed property acquisition.

3.10 Other Potential Environmental Issues

3.10.1 Noise

The proposed property acquisition is located in a rural area of Herkimer County. Furthermore the property acquisition will not result in a change in type or quantity of missions conducted at the Newport Research Facility, therefore an increase in the ambient noise level is not anticipated.

3.10.2 Parks

No designated parks are located within or adjacent to the project site. No properties purchased with Land and Water Conservation funds will be required for this project. No park land will be utilized for this project. All properties surrounding the project site are privately owned with the exception of the adjacent USAF facility.

3.10.3 Transportation

There will be no change in level of services to or from this property as a result of the proposed property acquisition.

3.10.4 Visual Resources

The property acquisition does not include the removal of vegetation within the project area or a change in the topographic setting of the Newport Research Facility. No adverse visual impacts are anticipated as a result of the property acquisition.

4.0 Conclusion

In accordance with the CEQ regulations and implementing NEPA and the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis process, the Air Force concludes that the Proposed Action will have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment.

Figure 1



Attachments

Attachment 1


USDA Hydric Soils Map

[illegible]

Hydric Rating by Map Unit—Herkimer County, New York, Southern Part
(Hydric Soils Map Irish Hill)

MAP LEGEND


Area of Interest (AOI)

 Area of Interest (AOI)


Soils

 Soil Map Units


Soil Ratings

 All Hydric

 Partially Hydric

 Not Hydric

 Unknown Hydric

 Not rated or not available

Political Features

 Cities

Water Features

 Oceans

 Streams and Canals


Transportation

 Rails

 Interstate Highways

 US Routes

 Major Roads

 Local Roads

MAP INFORMATION

Map Scale: 1:13,200 if printed on A size (8.5" × 11") sheet.

The soil surveys that comprise your AOI were mapped at 1:20,000.

Please rely on the bar scale on each map sheet for accurate map measurements.

Source of Map: Natural Resources Conservation Service
Web Soil Survey URL: <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>
Coordinate System: UTM Zone 18N NAD83

This product is generated from the USDA-NRCS certified data as of the version date(s) listed below.

Soil Survey Area: Herkimer County, New York, Southern Part
Survey Area Data: Version 6, Feb 5, 2010

Date(s) aerial images were photographed: 8/14/2006; 8/17/2006

The orthophoto or other base map on which the soil lines were compiled and digitized probably differs from the background imagery displayed on these maps. As a result, some minor shifting of map unit boundaries may be evident.



Hydric Rating by Map Unit

Hydric Rating by Map Unit— Summary by Map Unit — Herkimer County, New York, Southern Part				
Map unit symbol	Map unit name	Rating	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
BuB	Burdett silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Not Hydric	15.8	2.1%
CsB	Conesus silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes	Not Hydric	6.7	0.9%
HrE	Honeoye and Lansing silt loams, 25 to 35 percent slopes	Not Hydric	109.1	14.8%
HsD	Honeoye and Mohawk very stony silt loams, 0 to 25 percent slopes	Not Hydric	0.9	0.1%
HtB	Hornell silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Not Hydric	24.2	3.3%
HtC	Hornell silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Not Hydric	1.1	0.1%
LnC	Lansing silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Not Hydric	85.1	11.5%
LnD	Lansing silt loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes	Not Hydric	4.8	0.6%
McB	Manheim silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Not Hydric	223.0	30.3%
McC	Manheim silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Not Hydric	18.1	2.5%
MIB	Manlius shaly silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Not Hydric	42.8	5.8%
MoB	Mohawk silt loam, shale substratum, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Not Hydric	13.0	1.8%
MoC	Mohawk silt loam, shale substratum, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Not Hydric	7.1	1.0%
MoD	Mohawk silt loam, shale substratum, 15 to 25 percent slopes	Not Hydric	0.2	0.0%
NaB	Nassau silt loam, 3 to 8 percent slopes	Not Hydric	3.5	0.5%
NaC	Nassau silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes	Not Hydric	20.5	2.8%
NaD	Nassau silt loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes	Not Hydric	5.2	0.7%
Ro	Rough broken land	Not Hydric	30.7	4.2%
ShF	Shaly rock land, very steep	Unknown Hydric	125.4	17.0%
Totals for Area of Interest			737.2	100.0%

Description

This rating indicates the proportion of map units that meets the criteria for hydric soils. Map units are composed of one or more map unit components or soil types, each of which is rated as hydric soil or not hydric. Map units that are made up dominantly of hydric soils may have small areas of minor nonhydric components in the higher positions on the landform, and map units that are made up dominantly of nonhydric soils may have small areas of minor hydric components in the lower positions on the landform. Each map unit is designated as "all hydric," "partially hydric," "not hydric," or "unknown hydric," depending on the rating of its respective components.

"All hydric" means that all components listed for a given map unit are rated as being hydric, while "not hydric" means that all components are rated as not hydric. "Partially hydric" means that at least one component of the map unit is rated as hydric, and at least one component is rated as not hydric. "Unknown hydric" indicates that at least one component is not rated so a definitive rating for the map unit cannot be made.

Hydric soils are defined by the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils (NTCHS) as soils that formed under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions in the upper part (Federal Register, 1994). Under natural conditions, these soils are either saturated or inundated long enough during the growing season to support the growth and reproduction of hydrophytic vegetation.

The NTCHS definition identifies general soil properties that are associated with wetness. In order to determine whether a specific soil is a hydric soil or nonhydric soil, however, more specific information, such as information about the depth and duration of the water table, is needed. Thus, criteria that identify those estimated soil properties unique to hydric soils have been established (Federal Register, 2002). These criteria are used to identify map unit components that normally are associated with wetlands. The criteria used are selected estimated soil properties that are described in "Soil Taxonomy" (Soil Survey Staff, 1999) and "Keys to Soil Taxonomy" (Soil Survey Staff, 2006) and in the "Soil Survey Manual" (Soil Survey Division Staff, 1993).

If soils are wet enough for a long enough period of time to be considered hydric, they should exhibit certain properties that can be easily observed in the field. These visible properties are indicators of hydric soils. The indicators used to make onsite determinations of hydric soils are specified in "Field Indicators of Hydric Soils in the United States" (Hurt and Vasilas, 2006).

References:

Federal Register. July 13, 1994. Changes in hydric soils of the United States.

Federal Register. September 18, 2002. Hydric soils of the United States.

Hurt, G.W., and L.M. Vasilas, editors. Version 6.0, 2006. Field indicators of hydric soils in the United States.

Soil Survey Division Staff. 1993. Soil survey manual. Soil Conservation Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook 18.

Soil Survey Staff. 1999. Soil taxonomy: A basic system of soil classification for making and interpreting soil surveys. 2nd edition. Natural Resources Conservation Service. U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook 436.

Soil Survey Staff. 2006. Keys to soil taxonomy. 10th edition. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Rating Options

Aggregation Method: Absence/Presence

Tie-break Rule: Lower

Attachment 2

Federal Wetlands Map




U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

National Wetlands Inventory

Newport Irish Hill

Jun 16, 2010

Wetlands

-  Freshwater Emergent
-  Freshwater Forested/Shrub
-  Estuarine and Marine Deetwater
-  Estuarine and Marine
-  Freshwater Pond
-  Lake
-  Riverine
-  Other



This map is for general reference only. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is not responsible for the accuracy or currentness of the base data shown on this map. All wetlands related data should be used in accordance with the layer metadata found on the Wetlands Mapper web site.

User Remarks:

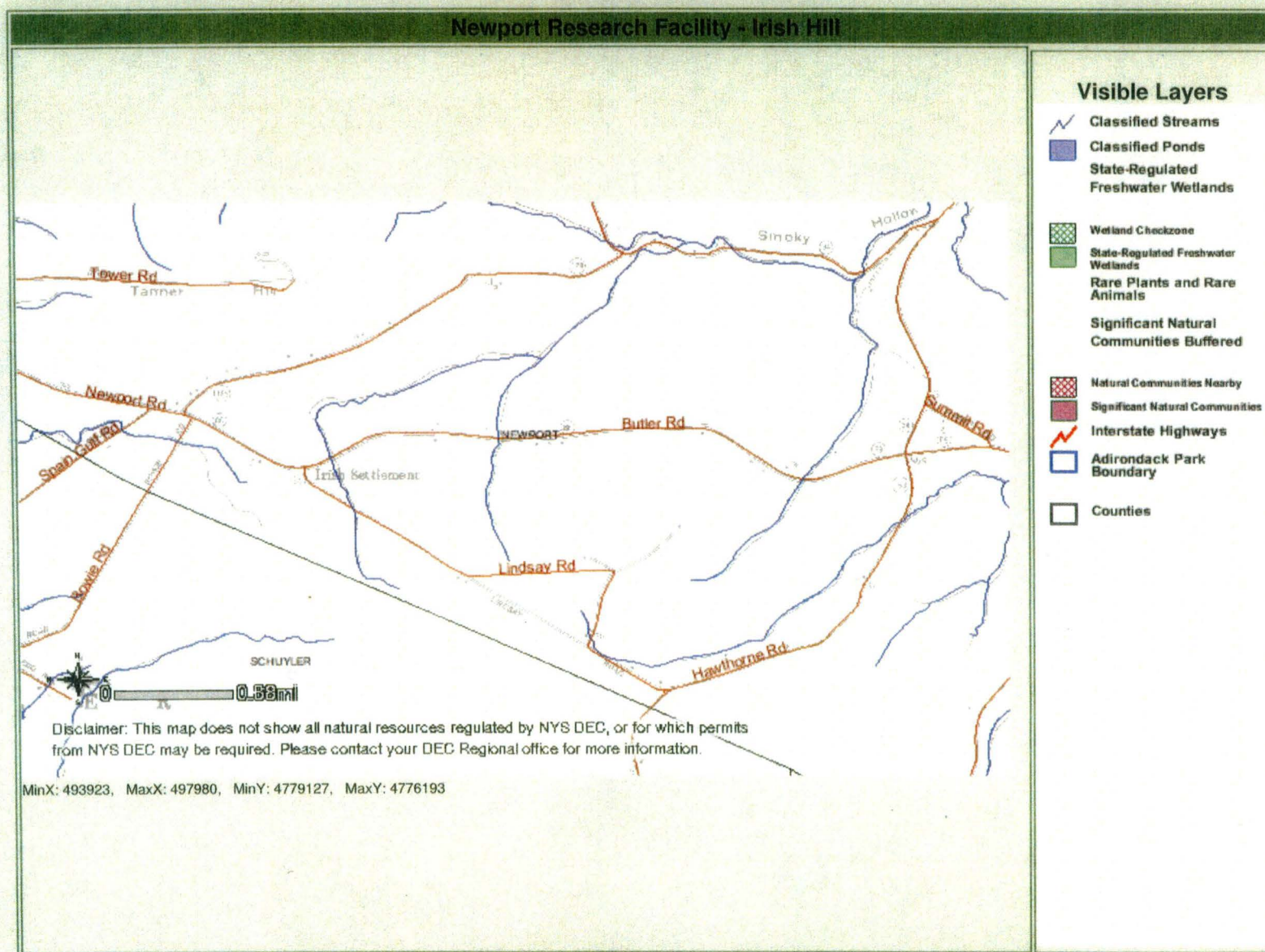
Wetland Map

Attachment 3

State Wetlands Map

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Please set your printer orientation to "Landscape".



Disclaimer: This map was prepared by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation using the most current data available. It is deemed accurate but is not guaranteed. NYS DEC is not responsible for any inaccuracies in the data and does not necessarily endorse any interpretations or products derived from the data.

Attachment 4

Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species documentation

United States Department of Interior-Fish and Wildlife Service



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



New York Field Office
3817 Luker Road, Cortland, NY 13045
Phone: (607) 753-9334
Fax: (607) 753-9699

Long Island Field Office
3 Old Barto Rd., Brookhaven, NY 11719
Phone: (631) 776-1401
Fax: (631) 776-1405

Endangered Species Act List Request Response Cover Sheet

This cover sheet is provided in response to a search of our website* for information regarding the potential presence of species under jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) within a proposed project area.

Attached is a copy of the New York State County List of Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species for the appropriate county(ies). The database that we use to respond to list requests was developed primarily to assist Federal agencies that are consulting with us under Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). Our lists include all Federally-listed, proposed, and candidate species known to occur, as well as those likely to occur, in specific counties.

The attached information is designed to assist project sponsors or applicants through the process of determining whether a Federally-listed, proposed, or candidate species and/or "critical habitat" may occur within their proposed project area and when it is appropriate to contact our offices for additional coordination or consultation. You may be aware that our offices have provided much of this information in the past in project-specific letters. However, due to increasing project review workloads and decreasing staff, we are now providing as much information as possible through our website. We encourage anyone requesting species list information to print out all materials used in any analyses of effects on listed, proposed, or candidate species.

The Service routinely updates this database as species are proposed, listed, and delisted, or as we obtain new biological information or specific presence/absence information for listed species. If project proponents coordinate with the Service to address proposed and candidate species in early stages of planning, this should not be a problem if these species are eventually listed. However, we recommend that both project proponents and reviewing agencies retrieve from our online database an *updated* list every 90 days to append to this document to ensure that listed species presence/absence information for the proposed project is *current*.

Reminder: Section 9 of the ESA prohibits unauthorized taking** of listed species and applies to Federal and non-Federal activities. For projects not authorized, funded, or carried out by a Federal agency, consultation with the Service pursuant to Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA is not required. However, no person is authorized to "take**" any listed species without appropriate authorizations from the Service. Therefore, we provide technical assistance to individuals and agencies to assist with project planning to avoid the potential for "take**," or when appropriate, to provide assistance with their application for an incidental take permit pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA.

Additionally, endangered species and their habitats are protected by Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA, which requires Federal agencies, in consultation with the Service, to ensure that any action it authorizes, funds, or carries out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. An assessment of the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts is required for all Federal actions that may affect listed species.

For instance, work in certain waters of the United States, including wetlands and streams, may require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). If a permit is required, in reviewing the application pursuant to the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*), the Service may concur, with or without recommending additional permit conditions, or recommend denial of the permit depending upon potential adverse impacts on fish and wildlife resources associated with project construction or implementation. The need for a Corps permit may be determined by contacting the appropriate Corps office(s).*

For additional information on fish and wildlife resources or State-listed species, we suggest contacting the appropriate New York State Department of Environmental Conservation regional office(s) and the New York Natural Heritage Program Information Services.*

Since wetlands, ponds, streams, or open or sheltered coastal waters may be present in the project area, it may be helpful to utilize the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps as an initial screening tool. However, they may or may not be available for the project area. Please note that while the NWI maps are reasonably accurate, they should not be used in lieu of field surveys for determining the presence of wetlands or delineating wetland boundaries for Federal regulatory purposes. Online information on the NWI program and digital data can be downloaded from Wetlands Mapper, http://wetlands.fws.gov/mapper_tool.htm.

Project construction or implementation should not commence until all requirements of the ESA have been fulfilled. After reviewing our website and following the steps outlined, we encourage both project proponents and reviewing agencies to contact our office to determine whether an accurate determination of species impacts has been made. If there are any questions about our county lists or agency or project proponent responsibilities under the ESA, please contact the New York or Long Island Field Office Endangered Species Program at the numbers listed above.

Attachment (county list of species)

*Additional information referred to above may be found on our website at:
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/es/section7.htm>

** Under the Act and regulations, it is illegal for any person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to *take* (includes harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect; or to attempt any of these), import or export, ship in interstate or foreign commerce in the course of commercial activity, or sell or offer for sale in interstate or foreign commerce any endangered fish or wildlife species and most threatened fish and wildlife species. It is also illegal to possess, sell, deliver, carry, transport, or ship any such wildlife that has been taken illegally. "Harm" includes any act which actually kills or injures fish or wildlife, and case law has clarified that such acts may include significant habitat modification or degradation that significantly impairs essential behavioral patterns of fish or wildlife.



Herkimer County

Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Species and Candidate Species

Except for occasional transient individuals, no Federally-listed or proposed endangered or threatened species, or candidate species under our jurisdiction are known to exist in this county.

Information current as of: 8/27/2010

**FEDERALLY LISTED ENDANGERED AND THREATENED
SPECIES AND CANDIDATE SPECIES LIKELY EXTIRPATED FROM NEW YORK**

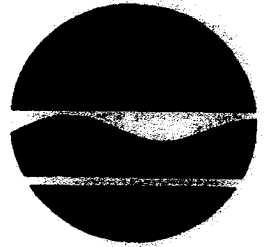
This list represents the best available information and is subject to change as new information becomes available.

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Status</u>
ANIMALS		
American burying beetle	<i>Nicrophorus americanus</i>	E
Canada lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	T
Eastern cougar	<i>Puma (=Felis) concolor cougar</i>	E
Gray wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>	E
Northeastern beach tiger beetle	<i>Cincindela dorsalis dorsalis</i>	T
PLANTS		
Northeastern bulrush	<i>Scirpus ancistrochaetus</i>	E
Swamp pink	<i>Helonias bullata</i>	T

Attachment 5

Communications with the New York Natural Heritage Program

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Division of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources
New York Natural Heritage Program
625 Broadway, 5th Floor, Albany, New York 12233-4757
Phone: (518) 402-8935 • **Fax:** (518) 402-8925
Website: www.dec.ny.gov



Alexander B. Grannis
Commissioner

June 22, 2010

James D. MacKecknie
LU Engineers
175 Sullys Trail, Suite 202
Corporate Crossings Office Park
Pittsford, NY 14534

Dear Mr. MacKecknie:


In response to your recent request, we have reviewed the New York Natural Heritage Program database with respect to an Environmental Assessment for the proposed Acquisition of 87.8 Acres – Adjacent to Air Force Research Lab – Rome Research Site, Project 13155, area as indicated on the map you provided, located in the Town of Newport, Herkimer County.

We have no records of rare or state-listed animals or plants, significant natural communities, or other significant habitats, on or in the immediate vicinity of your site.

The absence of data does not necessarily mean that rare or state-listed species, natural communities or other significant habitats do not exist on or adjacent to the proposed site. Rather, our files currently do not contain information which indicates their presence. For most sites, comprehensive field surveys have not been conducted. We cannot provide a definitive statement on the presence or absence of all rare or state-listed species or significant natural communities. This information should not be substituted for on-site surveys that may be required for environmental assessment.

Our databases are continually growing as records are added and updated. If this proposed project is still under development one year from now, we recommend that you contact us again so that we may update this response with the most current information.

This response applies only to known occurrences of rare or state-listed animals and plants, significant natural communities and other significant habitats maintained in the Natural Heritage Data bases. Your project may require additional review or permits; for information regarding other permits that may be required under state law for regulated areas or activities (e.g., regulated wetlands), please contact the appropriate NYS DEC Regional Office, Division of Environmental Permits, as listed at www.dec.ny.gov/about/39381.html.

Sincerely,

Tara Salerno, Information Services
New York Natural Heritage Program

Enc.
cc: Reg. 6, Wildlife Mgr.

663



June 7, 2010

NYSDEC-DFWMR
NY Natural Heritage Program-Information Services
625 Broadway, 5th Floor
Albany, NY 12233-4757

Attn: Ms. Jean Petrusiak, Information Specialist

Re: Request for Information on NYS Threatened & Endangered Species
Acquisition of Adjacent Parcels,
Newport Research Facility – Irish Hill
Air Force Research Laboratory, Rome Research Site
Town of Newport, Herkimer County
Lu Project No. 13155

Dear Ms. Petrusiak:

Lu Engineers has been retained as a consultant by the Air Force Research Laboratory, Rome Research Site, to conduct an evaluation of potential impacts related to the proposed acquisition of approximately 87.8 acres of land adjacent to the Newport Research Facility at Irish Hill. The project site is located in the Town of Newport, Herkimer County, New York. Currently, the Air Force Research Laboratory, Rome Research Site does not intend to disturb any of the lands associated with this acquisition.

Enclosed for your reference is a map of the project area. Please review your files and advise us if you have any reports of protected species within or adjacent to the project location. The project is on the Newport, New York USGS Quadrangle.

The latitude and longitude of the project site is as follows:

- 43° 8' 52" N/ 75° 2' 40" W

Thank you for your assistance. Please contact me at 585-385-7417 ext. 224 if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

James D. MacKecknie, MS
Project Geologist

Enclosure (1)

cc: Gregory L. Andrus, CHMM
File

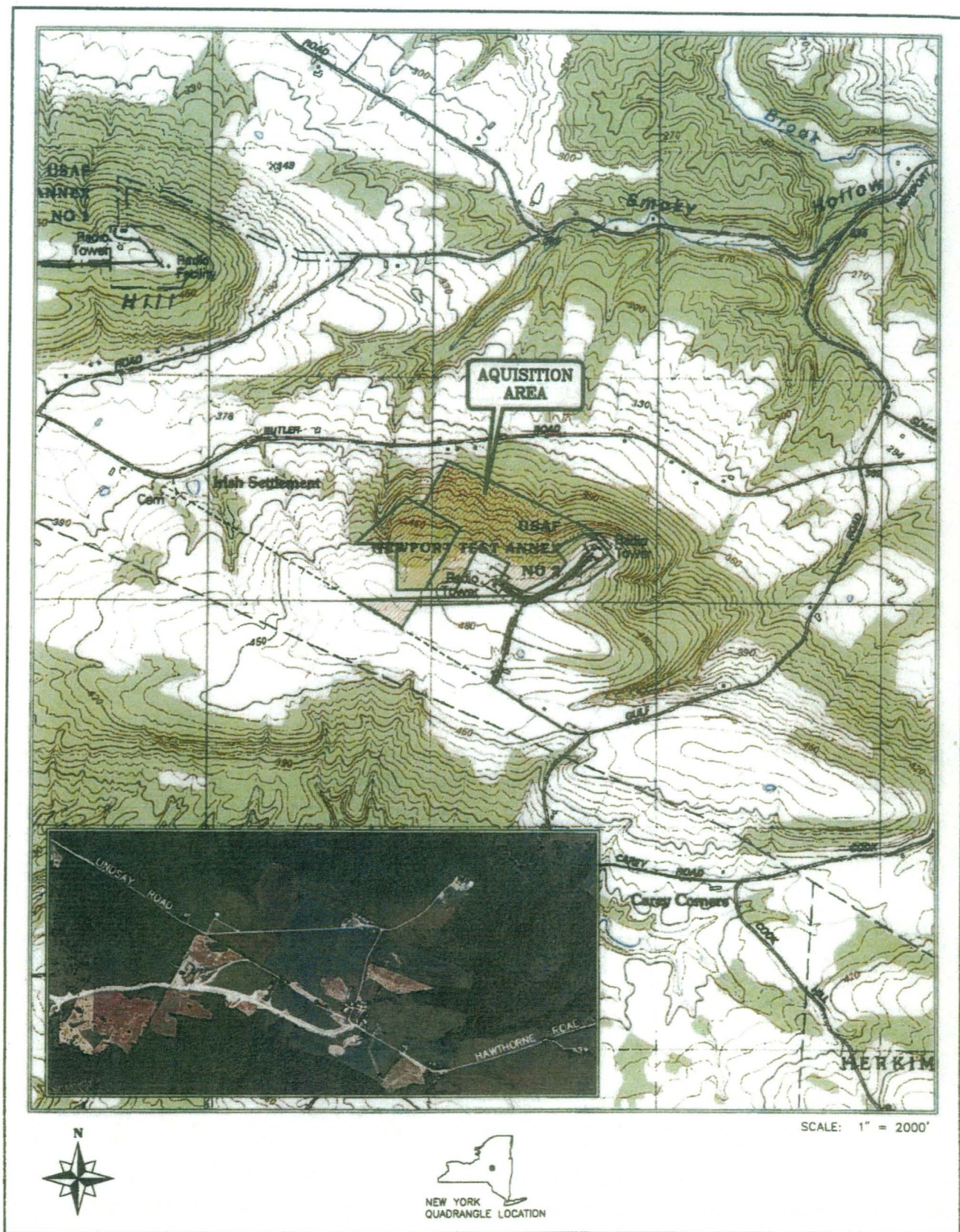


FIGURE 1. SITE LOCATION MAP
USAF | NEWPORT - IRISH HILL TEST FACILITY
ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE SURVEY
EASEMENT & AQUISITIONS
TOWN OF NEWPORT HERKIMER COUNTY, NY
P.N. 13155

DATE:	JUNE 2010
SCALE:	1:24,000
DRAWN BY:	DLS
MAP SOURCE: CORNELL UNIVERSITY GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION REPOSITORY PROVIDED BY NYDEC USGS DIGITAL RASTER QUADRANGLE 7.5 MINUTE TOPOGRAPHIC MAP (2000)	

Attachment 6

Communications with New York State Historic Preservation Office



175 Sullys Trail, Suite 202
Corporate Crossings Office Park
Pittsford, NY 14534
Ph 585.385.7417 Fax 585.385.3741

Letter of Transmittal

To: NYS Office of Historic Preservation
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau
Peebles Island, P.O. Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Date:	08/27/10	Project No.	13155
Attention:	Ms. Ruth Pierpont		
Re:	Property Acquisition		
	Air Force Research Laboratory/Rome		
	Research Site		
	Newport Research Facility - Irish Hill		
	Herkimer County		
	Newport, New York		

We are sending you:

☒ Attached ☐ Under Separate Cover Via _____ the following items
☐ Shop Drawings ☐ Prints
☐ Samples ☐ Specifications ☐ Plans
☐ Change Order ☐ _____ ☐ Copy of Letter

Copies	Date	No.	Description
1	8/27/2010		Project Review Request and Documentation

These materials are transmitted as checked below:

☐ For Approval ☐ Approved as Submitted ☐ Resubmit _____ Copies for Approval
☒ For Your Use ☐ Approved as Noted ☐ Submit _____ Copies for Distribution
☐ As Requested ☐ Return for Correction ☐ Return _____ Corrected Prints
☒ For Review and Comment ☐ Prints Returned After Loan to Us
☐ For Bids Due ☐ _____

Remarks: Ms. Pierpont: Please review the attached project review. The United States Air Force, Air Force Research Laboratory/ Rome Research Site intends to purchase properties adjacent to the Newport Research Facility at Irish Hill to provide additional security and prevent encroachment from private sector development. Please advise whether additional evaluation is required.

Thank You:

Jim

Copy to: File

Signed: _____
James D. MacKecknie

**Property Acquisition
Air Force Research Laboratory/Rome Research Site
Newport Research Facility (NRF) - Irish Hill
Town of Newport
Herkimer County, New York**

Project Description:

Lu Engineers has been retained as a consultant by the Air Force Research Laboratory, Rome Research Site (AFRL/RRS), to conduct an evaluation of potential impacts related to the proposed acquisition of approximately 87.8 acres of land adjacent to the Newport Research Facility at Irish Hill. The project site is located in the Town of Newport, Herkimer County, New York (Figure 1). The purpose of the acquisition is to protect the missions conducted at the site and to prevent encroachment through the development of adjacent properties. Currently, AFRL/RRS does not intend to disturb any of the lands associated with this acquisition with exception of the possible installation of a perimeter fence.

AFRL/RRS conducted cultural resource investigations of the Newport Research Facility in 1997, 2000 and 2002. The OPRHP number for the Newport Research Facility is 99PR1065. The Air Force facilities at Irish Hill include (Figures 2 and 3):

- The main office and Isolation Range (photo 1);
- The "Transmit Site" (photo 2);
- "Site X" (photo 3)

The parcels to be acquired by AFRL/RRS include (see Figure 2 and 3):

- Parcel 1: a 5.2 acre parcel currently owned by the Riccioni's located south of Lindsay Road (photo 4);
- Parcel 2: a 23 acre parcel currently owned by the Riccioni's located north of Lindsay Road (photos 5, 6, and 7);
- Parcel 3: a 55 acre parcel currently owned by the Denslow's located north of Lindsay Road (photos 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12); and
- Parcel 4: a 4.6 acre parcel currently owned by the Denslow's located south Lindsay Road (photos 13 and 14).

Parcel Descriptions:

Parcel 1 is a relatively flat old agricultural field bordered by a treed hedge rows to the south and east. The Lindsay Road forms the northern border. This parcel has been actively farm until recently. Vegetation consists of primarily pioneer species including goldenrod, hawthorns, multiflora rose, and raspberries.

The southern portion of the Parcel 2 is an old field that slopes gently to the north. The northern portion of this parcel consists of a moderately sloped forested hill side. A steep ravine occupies the western corner of this parcel. The old field portion of this site was

actively farmed until recently. Vegetation in the old field consists of primarily pioneer species including goldenrod, hawthorns, multiflora rose, and raspberries.

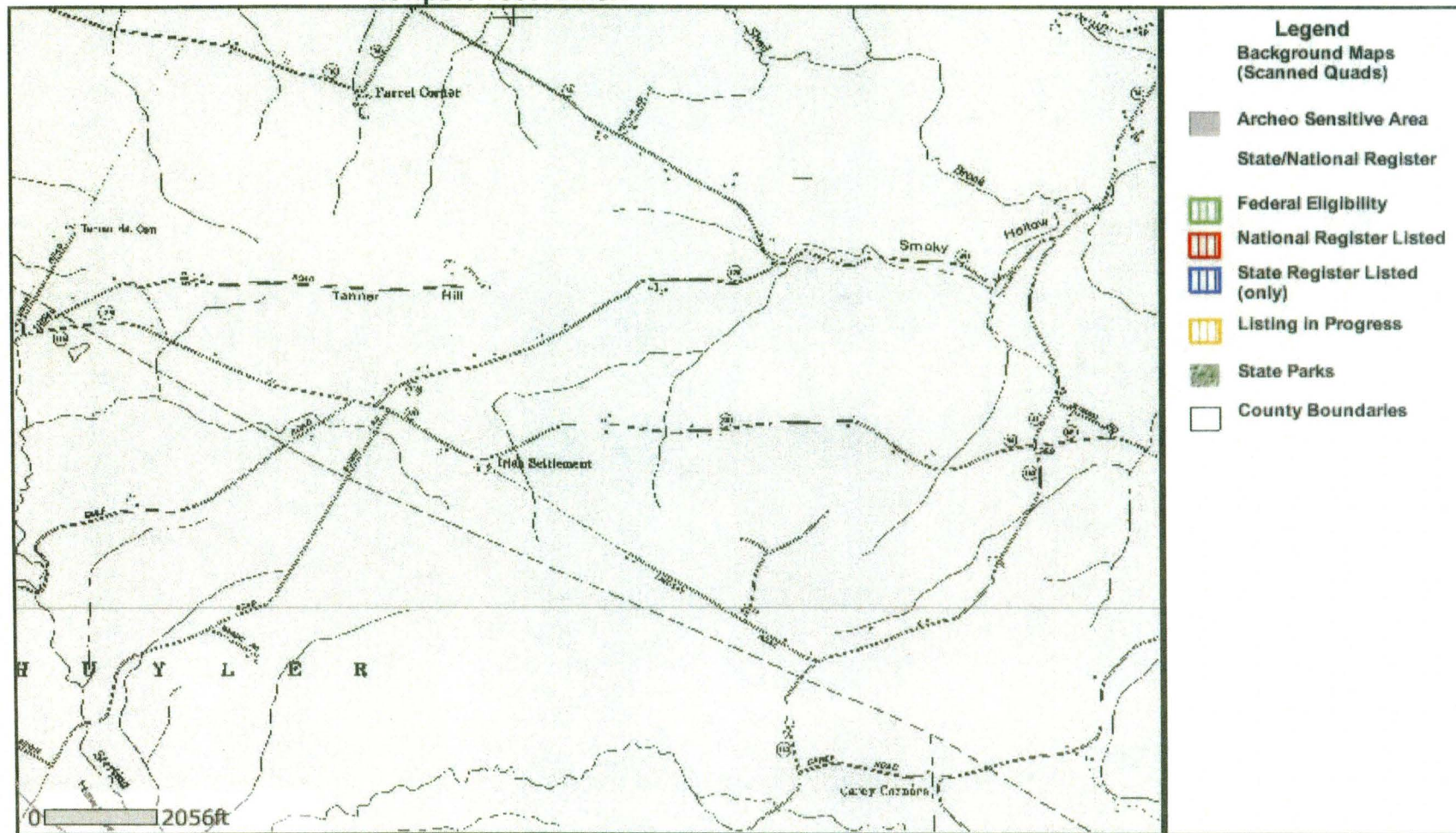
Parcel 3 is primarily a moderately to steeply sloped forested hillside bisected by several ravines. The exceptions are two portions of the parcel that are located along Lindsay Road. These portions of the parcel are relatively gently to moderately sloped fields. The western field of Parcel 3 is an active hay field. The eastern field was until recently a dairy pasture. This field has been recently plowed and seeded for hay.

The eastern portion of Parcel 4 is moderately sloped shrub land. The western portion is a recently cultivated hay field. This portion of Parcel 4 was until recently a dairy pasture.

Supporting Documents:

- 1) Figure 1, Site Location Map
- 2) Figure 2, Aerial Photo/Proposed Acquisitions
- 3) Figure 3, Topographic Map and Photo Locations
- 4) Site Photos
- 5) Map showing site location in relation to archeo-sensitive areas

Newport Test Annex



August 3, 2010

Disclaimer: This map was prepared by the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation National Register Listing Internet Application. The information was compiled using the most current data available. It is deemed accurate, but is not guaranteed.



New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

www.nysparks.com

September 01, 2010

David A. Paterson
Governor

Carol Ash
Commissioner

James D. MacKecknie
Lu Engineers
175 Sullys Trail 202
Pittsford, New York 14534

RECEIVED

SEP 07 2010

LU ENGINEERS

Re: AIR FORCE
Property Acquisition / Newport Research
Facility
Lindsay Rd / Irish Hill Facility
NEWPORT, Herkimer County
10PR05590

Dear Mr. MacKecknie:

Thank you for requesting the comments of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). We have reviewed the project in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. These comments are those of the SHPO and relate only to Historic/Cultural resources. They do not include potential environmental impacts to New York State Parkland that may be involved in or near your project. Such impacts must be considered as part of the environmental review of the project pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and/or the State Environmental Quality Review Act (New York Environmental Conservation Law Article 8).

Based upon this review, it is the SHPO's opinion that your project will have No Adverse Effect upon cultural resources in or eligible for inclusion in the National Registers of Historic Places.

If further correspondence is required regarding this project, please be sure to refer to the OPRHP Project Review (PR) number noted above.

Sincerely,

Ruth L. Pierpont
Director

Final Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Environmental Assessment for
Irish Hill Property Acquisition
Air Force Research Laboratory
Rome Research Site (AFRL/RRS)
Rome, New York

Introduction

The Air Force Research Laboratory/Rome Research Site (AFRL/RRS), Environmental and Occupational Health Office (RIOCV) prepared this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969; President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508; and Environmental Impact Analysis Process, 32 CFR 989. The decision in this FONSI is based upon information contained in the *Environmental Assessment Newport Research Facility Irish Hill*, dated September 12, 2011.

Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the NEPA review is to determine the extent of environmental impact that may result if 87.8 acres of land adjacent to the Newport Research Facility (NRF), Irish Hill, were to be acquired by AFRL/RRS and to evaluate whether these impacts, if any, would be significant. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to protect the missions conducted at the site and to prevent encroachment through the development of adjacent properties. Additional benefits to operation of the site include allowing for the trimming of trees and vegetation to enhance the effectiveness of the test transmissions at the site, as well as potential expansion of the facility in the future.

Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

The purpose of the acquisition is to protect the missions conducted at the site and to prevent encroachment through the development of adjacent properties. Currently, AFRL/RRS does not intend to disturb any of the lands associated with this acquisition with exception of the possible installation of a perimeter fence. The overall mission of the Newport Research Facility at Irish Hill will not change. There will be no increase in traffic or changes in imperviousness as a result of the property acquisition. Expansion of the facility in the future may include building a new range.

The Proposed Action Alternative is analyzed in the NEPA Review (EA). The Proposed Action Alternative is the only Alternative that meets the selection criteria, in addition to having no significant adverse effects on the natural or human environment.

One other Alternative discussed by the team was the leasing of the land, but this does not allow for future development of a new range, or expansion of the present test facility. Ownership is the only option that will allow for future development or expansion, therefore leasing is considered a non-viable Alternative. No additional Alternatives for the acquisition or consolidation of lands exist at the Newport site, since no other lands are available for purchase adjacent to or near the site.

The No-Action Alternative was carried forward for analysis in accordance with Air Force Regulation 32 CFR 989.8 (d). No-Action maintains the status quo at the facility which would allow possible encroachment to occur, potentially interfering with Air Force missions, and is therefore not a viable Alternative.

Environmental Analysis

Based on the analysis in the NEPA Review, AFRL/RRS has concluded that there would be no environmental barriers if and when it proceeds with the property acquisition at Irish Hill. The potential impacts to the human and natural environment were evaluated relative to the existing environment.

It was determined that the Proposed Action would result in less than significant impacts to air quality, water resources, safety and health, hazardous waste, contaminated materials, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, land use, noise and visual resources.

The analysis for the NEPA Review indicates that the property acquisition, as described under the Proposed Action, would not result in or contribute to significant negative cumulative or indirect impacts to the resources in the region.

Conclusion

In accordance with the CEQ regulations implementing NEPA and the Air Force Environmental Impact Analysis Process, the Air Force concludes that the Proposed Action would have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment and that the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not warranted.

The NRF Irish Hill NEPA review (EA) accompanies this FONSI and should be referenced for more specific information. The EA and FONSI were available for public review and comment for a two week period from 26 September, 2011 through 11 October, 2011 in the Newport Free Library, 7390 Main Street, Newport, NY. The public review announcement appeared in the Utica Observer Dispatch and the Herkimer Telegram as advertised in the AFRL/RRS Legal Office Public Notice. The public review process ended October 1st, 2011 and is now closed. During the public review period, the 88th Air Base Wing Public Affairs Office (ABW PA) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Dayton Ohio, received no comments or inquiries on the EA of FONSI.

For additional information on this EA/FONSI, please contact Ms. Estella Holmes, Public affairs, 88 ABW/PA, 1801 Tenth St., Suite 2, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH 45433-5543, (937) 255-3395, email: estella.holmes@wpafb.af.mil.

SIGNED: David P. Blanks DATE: 31 OCT 2011

DAVID P. BLANKS, Col, USAF
Commander, Rome Research Site